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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN

INTRODUCTION

1. In my letter dated 26 April 1993 (S/25697), I informed the members of the Security Council of my decision, after consulting with the Government of Tajikistan and others, to appoint Mr. Ismat Kittani as my Special Envoy for Tajikistan for an initial period of three months. In the letter, I outlined Mr. Kittani's mandate as follows:

(a) To obtain agreement on a cease-fire and make recommendations on such international monitoring mechanisms as may be appropriate;

(b) To ascertain the positions of all the concerned parties and make good offices available to assist the establishment of a process of negotiations for a political solution;

(c) To enlist the help of neighbouring countries and others concerned in achieving the above objectives.

2. In a letter dated 29 April 1993 (S/25698), the President of the Council informed me that its members welcomed my decision to appoint Mr. Kittani as my Special Envoy for Tajikistan. They also indicated their interest in receiving reports on Mr. Kittani's mission and on any future recommendations I might wish to make in the context of that mission.

3. Shortly after Mr. Kittani's arrival in Dushanbe on 14 May 1993, he held several meetings with the President, the First Vice-President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan. He visited Khorog, the regional capital of Gorno-Badakhshan, where he had discussions with various groups, including the field commanders of the major groups opposing the central Government. In Dushanbe, he had an opportunity to exchange views with its small diplomatic community, as well as with a number of opposition elements in the capital. During the same period, the Special Envoy visited the capitals of Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and, a few weeks later, Saudi Arabia, for talks with their leaders.

I. BACKGROUND TO THE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN

4. The conflict in Tajikistan has resulted in thousands of deaths and more than 400,000 refugees and displaced persons. It has been influenced by economic, social, demographic, religious and ideological factors, which were aggravated by the rapid pace of change associated with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This disrupted political and economic structures and raised expectations for fuller participation in the country's affairs in regions and groups that had been traditionally excluded from power, resulting in a struggle between different clans for a redistribution of power. The clans are generally divided by region, except in the Kurgan-Tyube area, where the population is mixed and which has been the scene of the worst fighting. At the same time, independence made possible a revival of Islam in the country. Some members of the Islamic clergy are active in the armed opposition to the current Government, much of which is based in northern Afghanistan, where there are approximately 60,000 Tajik refugees.

5. The conflict in Tajikistan has also been fuelled by an abundance of arms. Large quantities of arms were left by Soviet forces when they evacuated from Afghanistan through the territory of Tajikistan. In addition, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the southern border of Tajikistan with Afghanistan (1,387 kilometres in length) became virtually open and porous to arms smuggling.

6. Twenty-five per cent of the 5.5 million population of Tajikistan are Uzbeks. Uzbeks ethnically belong to the Turkic group of peoples, while Tajik culture and language are closely linked to those of the Persian-speaking peoples. The population of Uzbekistan itself includes 1 million Tajiks. In addition, another 10 per cent or more of Tajikistan's population consists of minorities, particularly Russians, Ukrainians and Germans, and smaller groups of Jews, Koreans, Tatars, Georgians, Armenians, Bachkirs and others.

II. VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF TAJIKISTAN

7. During the Special Envoy's visit to Dushanbe in May and June 1993, the Tajik leaders described the current situation in the country as difficult and tense, although they pointed out that it was becoming more stable. They indicated that the Government had strengthened its contacts with opposition groups in the Gorno-Badakhshan region and some areas of the Garm Valley, resulting in the lifting of the blockade of the road that connects Dushanbe with Gorno-Badakhshan and the return of more than 2,000 refugees and internally displaced persons. The Tajik authorities said that the situation in the border areas between Tajikistan and Afghanistan and the refugee issue remained matters of the highest concern. They recognized that without the early repatriation of all Tajik refugees from northern Afghanistan, peace and tranquillity could not be achieved. The Tajik leaders emphasized the urgent need for multilateral talks with the authorities of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to discuss confidence-building measures. They further said that the Government would appreciate the assistance of the United Nations to this end.

8. With regard to a cease-fire, the Tajik leaders stressed that the non-use of force was the main principle applied by the Tajik Government to its relations with neighbouring countries.

9. Regarding the establishment of international mechanisms to monitor a possible cease-fire, the Tajik authorities said that they would welcome the dispatch of United Nations peace-keeping forces to the border areas with Afghanistan. In their view, even the deployment of a limited number of United Nations peace-keepers, combined with peacemaking efforts, could be an effective deterrent to further escalation of the conflict.

10. With regard to the establishment of a process of negotiations for a political solution, the Tajik leaders said that they considered a political dialogue leading to a political solution as the only rational way of resolving the existing problems. They pointed out that the Government was using dialogue with leaders of some opposition groups inside the country as the instrument for achieving peace and stability. They did not, however, reply to the question of whom the Government considered to be legitimate counterparts in the political dialogue.

11. In connection with the refugee issue, the Tajik leaders expressed their special concern over the fate of 30,000 refugees in the Kunduz province of Afghanistan, who they believed were being kept by force, prevented from repatriating voluntarily and used as recruits for opposition fighting groups. In this regard, the Tajik leaders recognized the importance of opening a mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Kunduz area, which could be instrumental in the voluntary repatriation of the refugees.

III. VIEWS OF THE TAJIK OPPOSITION

12. In Dushanbe, Khorog and Teheran, my Special Envoy held talks with leaders of the political opposition and other prominent opposition personalities.

13. With regard to a cease-fire, the Tajik opposition leaders said that the explosive situation would continue as long as the issue of refugees was unresolved. They stressed the need for safety and security guarantees for returnees. It was, in their view, regrettable that the Government of Tajikistan had failed to implement its promises on a general amnesty and had continued to persecute its political opponents. In order to achieve a cease-fire, the interlocutors emphasized the need to ascertain the views and to enlist the cooperation of the Tajik armed opposition currently based in Afghanistan.

14. The opposition leaders emphasized the need to establish international mechanisms to monitor a possible cease-fire and the process of national reconciliation. They said that such mechanisms would be essential to ensure political agreements among the parties to the conflict and to provide security guarantees to the representatives of some regions of Tajikistan, and especially to returnees from Afghanistan.

15. The Tajik opposition leaders recognized the need for the establishment of a process of negotiations for a political solution. They expressed different

views on how to identify legitimate and, at the same time, influential interlocutors for negotiations. They said that there were some moderate elements in the current Government, who could be considered as possible interlocutors.

16. As a possible way out of the dangerous political stalemate, some political leaders of the Gorno-Badakhshan region suggested that: (a) a negotiation forum for all political forces of Tajikistan be established; (b) the readiness of the current Government for dialogue and compromise be ensured; and (c) security guarantees be provided to the people of Gorno-Badakhshan and Garm regions, the first of these being a guarantee of their right to life.

17. Certain exiled opposition leaders expressed the need to promote reconciliation of all groups of Tajik society, regardless of their national, ethnic, clan, religious or political affiliations, and their incorporation into the political, economic and social life of the country.

IV. VIEWS OF NEIGHBOURING AND OTHER COUNTRIES

A. Establishment of a cease-fire

18. Most of the officials to whom the Special Envoy spoke agreed on the importance of obtaining an agreement on the establishment of a cease-fire. Some raised concerns about the political environment in Tajikistan, pointing out that an explosive situation still existed. They viewed the prospects for an early settlement of the conflict as uncertain and spoke of a danger of further escalation of fighting, both at the Tajik-Afghan border and inside Tajikistan itself. In their assessment, time was running out for engaging exiled Tajik leaders in a serious effort at reconciliation.

19. Others believed that the most critical stage of the civil war in Tajikistan was over and that the situation was relatively stable, but an agreement on a cease-fire remained an important priority. They mentioned that there were political problems in Tajikistan which should be tackled only by political means; otherwise, Tajikistan would remain for a long time a serious problem for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), especially for its close neighbours.

B. Establishment of international mechanisms to monitor a possible cease-fire

20. Some officials stressed that such mechanisms and a sound United Nations presence in Tajikistan would be essential to ensure political agreements among the parties to the conflict. They noted that a United Nations presence in Tajikistan would be a serious guarantee of the safety and security of the returnees and would facilitate the strict implementation of the general amnesty decree by the Government of Tajikistan.

21. Other supporters of a monitoring mechanism added that it would provide security guarantees to representatives of some regions of Tajikistan, and especially to returnees from Afghanistan. They stated they would remain ready

to participate in international monitoring mechanisms. Some officials indicated a preference for the deployment of United Nations military observers, after a cease-fire agreement had been reached.

22. It was noted by others that four CIS countries had already agreed on the modalities of a peace-keeping operation in Tajikistan. They also expressed strong interest in the deployment of United Nations military observers, who would ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the CIS peace-keepers and provide them with advice.

C. Establishment of a process of negotiations for a political solution

23. One neighbouring State believed that a political dialogue between the opposition and the Dushanbe authorities might be the only way out of the current dangerous political stalemate. Its officials said their Government could provide its assistance in facilitating such a dialogue. They were convinced that the issue of Tajik refugees, especially those in the Kunduz area, should not be addressed separately, but only as a part of a comprehensive political solution.

24. Officials of another neighbouring State said that the United Nations and some "friendly countries" should act decisively and as quickly as possible for the establishment of a political process in order to prevent another round of military confrontation. In this regard, they emphasized the need to reintegrate into the political process Tajik groups that had found refuge in Afghanistan and other countries. They emphasized that the mandate of the Special Envoy provided good and realistic grounds for national reconciliation between different Tajik groups.

25. In the view of some authorities, the current Tajik Government enjoyed the support of the majority of the population. They stressed that, under current circumstances, there was no alternative to a political solution and the establishment of a process of negotiations among all concerned Tajik parties. The officials said that they supported and would continue to support the process of stabilization in Tajikistan, but made it clear that genuine national reconciliation could be reached only by the Tajiks themselves.

26. Other supporters of the establishment of a political process emphasized the difficulties in working out modalities for future negotiations. However, the interests of Gorno-Badakhshan, Garm and other regions should also be addressed through a process of political negotiations. In this regard, it was made clear that opposition elements currently based in Gorno-Badakhshan and Afghanistan should be included in the political process. It was also stated that some independent-thinking intellectuals could contribute fruitfully to a process of national reconciliation. Other officials said agreement on a cease-fire and political dialogue for national reconciliation should be considered as a package.

27. As far as the modalities of a possible political dialogue were concerned, some officials said that indirect talks under United Nations auspices might be the best way of engaging the opposing sides and promised that they would do

their utmost to bridge the existing gap between the opposition and the Government.

28. The same officials emphasized that continued instability and fragmentation in Afghanistan had strong negative implications for Tajikistan. They said that the United Nations should undertake comprehensive efforts to address both the Tajik and the Afghan conflicts.

V. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

29. During the month of July 1993, disturbing developments have taken place that have reinforced my concern about the situation in Tajikistan and its far-reaching implications for peace and security in central Asia. The most serious development on the ground was a large-scale attack on 13 July 1993 by fighters who crossed the border from Afghanistan into Tajikistan and occupied a Russian military post on the border in the Shurobad district. This major incident resulted in 27 deaths and many more injuries. Its repercussions have transformed the situation into an international crisis of multiple dimensions.

30. A few days before this clash, on the initiative of President Rabbani of Afghanistan, agreement was reached at a summit meeting of the countries members of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Istanbul to establish a commission composed of representatives of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation to find, through negotiation and dialogue, a peaceful solution to the problem on the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. This meeting will be held in Dushanbe in late August with the participation of a representative of UNHCR.

31. President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan also told the Special Envoy that he was thinking of undertaking a parallel initiative involving a larger number of countries. It would call for a regional meeting in Tashkent to review the situation in Central Asia focusing on the Tajik crisis and its ramifications. President Karimov's intention would be that the United Nations should be fully involved in his plan.

32. President Yeltsin approved a decree on 28 July 1993 on the settlement of the situation at the Tajik-Afghan border, appointing Foreign Minister Kozyrev as his Special Representative for Tajikistan. He is authorized to implement measures to promote talks between the Government of Tajikistan and the Tajik opposition and to facilitate the dialogue between Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan on the settlement of the conflict.
President Yeltsin also took the initiative of hosting a summit meeting of heads of State and Government from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the situation in Tajikistan, which took place in Moscow on 7 August 1993. A representative of the President of Turkmenistan also attended the summit. At the meeting, the leaders, inter alia, emphasized that a political settlement remained the main priority and called on the international community to support efforts to reach a political settlement. At the same meeting, the Tajik Government expressed its intention to develop a dialogue with opposition forces.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

33. The Special Envoy, in all his discussions, has emphasized on my behalf that violence and continuing armed conflict would not solve the problems of Tajikistan, but would lead only to more bloodshed and further aggravate the situation. A solution can come only through peaceful reconciliation with the widest possible participation of all political groups and all the regions of the country. In addition, he has told all concerned that the High Commissioner for Refugees should be allowed to carry out her mandate in all parts of Afghanistan so that she can, in particular, reach all concentrations of Tajik refugees.

34. Given the escalating crisis on the Tajik-Afghan border, which has had varied reactions in Afghanistan, I have asked my Special Envoy to visit Kabul as soon as possible for discussions with government leaders regarding his mandate in Tajikistan and to ascertain the views and positions of the Tajik opposition leaders residing in Afghanistan. In addition, Mr. Kittani will also visit other countries of the region.

35. I continue to be deeply concerned at the situation in Tajikistan, which now contains the seeds of a major threat to peace and security for central Asia and beyond. What is urgently needed is a concerted effort to persuade the Government of Tajikistan and all major tendencies in the opposition to accept the need for a political solution and to participate in a negotiating process. I have asked a number of interested Governments to assist me and my Special Envoy in such an effort and I have received a favourable response. I have also let it be known that I will be ready to recommend to the Security Council a positive reaction to any reasonable request by the parties for United Nations assistance in their efforts to implement the various initiatives under consideration.

36. In these circumstances, I propose to extend the mandate of my Special Envoy for a further three months, i.e. until 31 October 1993.

37. The Special Envoy has reported to me that UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization are conducting humanitarian operations in the country. Emergency humanitarian assistance commenced in January 1993, when the first United Nations appeal was issued. Assistance was increased following the disastrous floods two months ago. The Special Envoy's view, with which I agree, is that Tajikistan needs advice and assistance in developing various parts of its economic and social infrastructure, as well as humanitarian assistance, which will be required at least until the spring of 1994. The Government has also sought United Nations advisory services in the field of human rights.

38. In order to provide these different types of support to the Government of Tajikistan, a multifaceted United Nations presence will be required in Dushanbe. I shall be discussing with the Government and with the various agencies, programmes, funds and offices how this presence can best be organized. In the interim, I propose to extend, for a period of three months, the small team of United Nations officials currently in Tajikistan.